

# Fur Trapper Survey 2005-2006

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## **Abstract**

An estimate of Wisconsin's furbearer harvest by licensed trappers is used to document the economic importance of trapping and to assist in the management of furbearer species. Sixty-one percent of respondents said they trapped during the 2005-06 season. Trappers used a total of 289,000 sets on 526,000 nights during the 2005-06 trapping season.

## **Methods**

The Fur Trapper Survey was mailed to a sample of 6,000 people who purchased a resident trapping license, or a conservation patron license. The sample was selected from the 2005-06 resident trapping ( $\approx 3,540$ ) and the conservation patron ( $\approx 2,460$ ) license holders who indicated they were trappers. A second mailing was sent to non-respondents. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part I questioned trappers on their trapping season including; number and species of furbearers trapped, average number of sets used, number of days spent trapping, total trapping expenses, and number of furs sold in and out of Wisconsin (Fig. 1). Part I also included questions on the hunting of furbearers by trappers. Part II pertained only to beaver trappers and will not be discussed in this summary. Please refer to the Beaver Trapper Report in this publication for this information. Data from all returned questionnaires were entered into the DNR UNIX computer and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

## **Results**

All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool. Responses were received from 1,976 of 6,000 trappers surveyed. The resulting response rate was 32.9%.

Sixty-one percent of the respondents actively trapped for furbearers during the 2005-06 season. Furtrapper license holders were two times as likely to trap as conservation patron license holders (81% vs. 36%). Conservation patron license holders were as active during the 2005-06 trapping season (36%) as during the 2004-05 season (37%). The same holds true for Furtrapper license holders with 81% actively trapping in 2005-06 and 81% in 2004-05 seasons.

The majority of respondents (35%) trapped in the Northern Region of the state (Table 1). During the 2005-06 season, trappers trapped an average of 31 days. This was the less than the 2004-05 season (34 days). The average trapper incurred \$279.45 of expenses on such things as traps, lures, gas, and a license. This is very similar to 2004-05 average of \$290.70. The mean number of days spent trapping ranged from 34 to 27 days among regions, while the mean trapping expense ranged from \$201.29 to \$327.31 among regions (Table 2). Statewide, 16% of trappers also hunted furbearers in 2005-06.

When the results of this survey are expanded to the larger population of licensed furbearer trappers, we can approximate that 8,966 licensed trappers actively trapped and 3,558 trappers also hunted furbearers during the 2005-06 season. Roughly 3% of licensed furbearer trappers pursued bobcat, while 53% pursued raccoons (Table 3). The estimated number of red fox, gray fox, coyote, and raccoon harvested by hunting were 1,071, 415, 7,646, and 19,414,

respectively (Table 4). A summary of 2005-06 furbearer harvests and sales can be found in Table 5.

Wisconsin requires hunters and trappers to register all kills for bobcat, fisher, and otter. The official harvest for these species are from registration data, (please see Bobcat, Fisher, and Otter Harvest Reports in this document). The survey asked trappers the number trapped for each of these species. Survey results are not corrected for response bias, prestige bias or animals caught and released. These are obvious, as the harvest estimates for these species from the trapper questionnaire are higher/lower than the registered harvest totals.

Foot hold traps (52.8%) were more frequently used than any other types, body gripping 37.2%, cable restraints 4.6%, cages 3.1%, and snares 2.3%. Trappers averaged 20.3 foot hold traps per trapper, followed by cable restraint, body gripping, snares, and cages at 13.8, 13.8, 8.0, and 4.2 respectively.

Cable restraints became legal in Wisconsin in 2004 during the latter portion of the existing canine season (January 1 – February 15). Trappers were asked if they used cable restraints during the 2005-06 trapping seasons. Eleven percent of Wisconsin trappers used cable restraints during the open season. The average number of sets was 13.8 in 2005-06. Trappers were asked, "Overall, how did cable restraints work for you"; 55.6% said "Excellent" or "Good", while 44.4% said "Fair" or "Poor". Seventy-nine percent of cable restraint users reported no problems with catching a dog. Of those that did, the mean number of dogs caught being 1.7. Most trappers surveyed, 51.3%, said they plan on using cable restraints in future years.

**Table 1.** *DNR regions where furbearer trappers did most of their trapping, 2005-06.*

| Region        | # of Trappers | Percent of Trappers |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Northern      | 3,102         | 34.6%               |
| Northeast     | 995           | 11.1%               |
| West Central  | 1,739         | 19.4%               |
| Southeast     | 843           | 9.4%                |
| South Central | 1,632         | 18.2%               |
| Unrecorded    | 655           | 7.3%                |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>8,966</b>  | <b>100%</b>         |

**Table 2.** *Percent of furbearer trappers that hunted, average number of days spent trapping, and average trapping expenses by DNR region during the 2005-06 trapping season.*

| Region           | % of Trappers<br>who hunted | Average<br>number of days<br>trapped | Average<br>trapping expense |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Northern         | 17.3%                       | 30.2                                 | \$265.44                    |
| Northeast        | 20.9%                       | 27.6                                 | \$263.74                    |
| West Central     | 19.6%                       | 34.7                                 | \$318.83                    |
| Southeast        | 17.5%                       | 31.8                                 | \$327.31                    |
| South Central    | 20.9%                       | 32.2                                 | \$280.52                    |
| Unrecorded       | 11.6%                       | 26.7                                 | \$201.29                    |
| <b>Statewide</b> | <b>15.8%</b>                | <b>31.1</b>                          | <b>\$279.45</b>             |

**Table 3.** *Estimated number of active furbearer trappers pursuing each furbearer species, and percent of active trappers trapping for each species, 2005-06.*

| Species  | # of Trappers | % of Trappers |
|----------|---------------|---------------|
| Bobcat   | 278           | 3.1%          |
| Coyote   | 1,686         | 18.8%         |
| Fisher   | 2,403         | 26.8%         |
| Gray Fox | 699           | 7.8%          |
| Mink     | 2,645         | 29.5%         |
| Muskrat  | 4,295         | 47.9%         |
| Otter    | 2,412         | 26.9%         |
| Opossum  | 386           | 4.3%          |
| Raccoon  | 4,707         | 52.5%         |
| Red Fox  | 1,632         | 18.2%         |
| Skunk    | 287           | 3.2%          |
| Weasel   | 601           | 6.7%          |

**Table 4.** *Harvest of furbearers by trappers who hunted, and total harvest (trapping harvest + hunting harvest) for each of the commonly hunted species during the 2005-06 fur harvest season.*

| Species      | Hunted Harvest | Total Harvest                        |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
|              |                | (Trapping Harvest + Hunting Harvest) |
| Coyote       | 7,646          | 14,474                               |
| Gray Fox     | 415            | 1,855                                |
| Red Fox      | 1,071          | 5,472                                |
| Raccoon      | 19,414         | 106,669                              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>28,546</b>  | <b>128,470</b>                       |

**Table 5.** *The 2005-06 fur harvest summary based on responses from licensed furbearer trappers.*

| Furbearer    | # Caught in Traps | # Sets Used    | Total Days Trapped | # Sold in Wisconsin | # Sold out of State |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Bobcat       | 334               | 2,383          | 5,099              | 67                  | 22                  |
| Coyote       | 6,828             | 19,750         | 45,654             | 3,874               | 1,188               |
| Fisher       | 2,161             | 11,920         | 34,174             | 867                 | 441                 |
| Gray Fox     | 1,440             | 7,511          | 17,657             | 794                 | 401                 |
| Mink         | 19,409            | 38,603         | 70,325             | 10,903              | 6,784               |
| Muskrat      | 330,339           | 100,637        | 104,237            | 212,512             | 81,399              |
| Otter        | 2,240             | 11,810         | 50,967             | 1,120               | 560                 |
| Opossum      | 23,610            | 4,008          | 13,278             | 3,911               | 1,150               |
| Raccoon      | 87,255            | 66,280         | 122,036            | 54,167              | 18,377              |
| Red Fox      | 4,401             | 16,522         | 41,750             | 2,338               | 1,240               |
| Skunk        | 5,930             | 4,320          | 9,627              | 1,492               | 430                 |
| Weasel       | 3,882             | 5,871          | 11,890             | 1,492               | 1,722               |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>487,829</b>    | <b>289,615</b> | <b>526,694</b>     | <b>293,537</b>      | <b>113,714</b>      |

Dear Wisconsin Furbearer Trapper:

You have been selected to help gather information on fur trapping. Completion of this survey is voluntary. You can make an important contribution to the future of Wisconsin's fur harvests and trapping activity by taking the time to complete the attached survey. If you did not trap furbearers, simply answer questions #1 and #6 and return the survey. If you did trap, please fill out Part I of the survey. If you trapped beaver, please also complete Part II of the survey.

The information requested from you and other trappers is essential in managing Wisconsin's valuable fur resource. Through your cooperation we can determine catch, trapping success, trapping pressure, and trapper characteristics on a statewide basis. These facts are necessary for a better understanding of how regulations affect your trapping and the welfare of furbearer populations. With your help, the future of regulated trapping as a public service will be assured as we face challenges locally and globally.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey. Reverse the flap on the survey, tape the edge and mail. Using your stamp will save funds for management even though no postage is required to return the survey. ***Please reply even if you did not trap this season or were not successful.***

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John F. Olson  
Furbearer Ecologist

**PART I.**

|  |                           |   |                       |                             |                             |
|--|---------------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Did you trap for furbearers in Wisconsin during this season?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No</div>   |                           | 2. In what DNR REGION did you do MOST of your trapping?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Northern</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> (3) West Central</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> (5) South Central</div></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Northeast</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> (4) Southeast</div></div>             |                       |                             |                             |
| 3. About how many days did you trap? _____ days trapped  |                           |   |                       |                             |                             |
| 4. Please fill in all five blanks for each kind of furbearer you trapped in Wisconsin during the past season:  |                           |   |                       |                             |                             |
|  | Number caught<br>in traps | Average Number<br>of Sets   | Total Days<br>Trapped | Number SOLD<br>in Wisconsin | Number SOLD<br>Out of State |
| Otter  | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Muskrat  | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Mink   | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Raccoon  | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Red Fox  | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Gray Fox   | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Coyote   | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Bobcat   | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Fisher   | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Skunk*   | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Opossum*   | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| Weasel   | _____                     | _____   | _____                 | _____                       | _____                       |
| *If either skunks or opossums were caught incidentally, then put zeros for average number of sets and total days trapped.  |                           |   |                       |                             |                             |
| 5. Estimate your total trapping expenses for the past season: (traps, lures, gas, license, etc.)<br>\$ _____   |                           | 6. Did you also HUNT furbearers with gun and/or dogs during the past season?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No</div><div>If yes, please give the <b>number</b> of each kind taken:</div></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div>_____ Red Fox</div><div>_____ Gray Fox</div><div>_____ Coyote</div><div>_____ Raccoon</div></div> |                       |                             |                             |
| 7. Of the coyotes and foxes that you killed, how many had mange?<br>_____ Red Fox    _____ Gray Fox    _____ Coyote  |                           |   |                       |                             |                             |
| 8. During the past trapping season, on average, how many traps did you use?<br>_____ footholds    _____ cage    _____ snares<br>_____ body-grippers    _____ cable restraints  |                           | 9. Cable restraints have been legal since 2004 during the latter portion of the existing canine season (January 1- February 15).<br>Did you use cable restraints in 2006? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No<br>If yes, how many sets did you have? _____   |                       |                             |                             |
| 10. Overall, how did cable restraints work for you?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Excellent    <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Good</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Fair    <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Poor</div></div> |                           | 11. It is important for trappers to document the release of dogs from cable restraints. Did you restrain and successfully release any dogs?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No</div><div>If yes, how many? _____</div></div>   |                       |                             |                             |
| 12. Do you plan to use cable restraints in future years?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No</div>  |                           |   |                       |                             |                             |

**Figure 1.** The 2005-06 furtrapper questionnaire.